



The hope, which the Child of Bethlehem gives us, offers a goal, a good destiny ... the salvation of humanity, beatitude to the one who entrusts himself to the merciful God. Pope Francis suggests that we ask ourselves, 'do I walk with hope or is my interior life stopped, closed? Is my heart a closed drawer or a drawer open to hope, which has me walk with Christ, and not alone?' (Pope Francis' Homily, December 2016)

2017 has begun and the news continues to be filled with stories that can shake the most hopeful person. As I reflect personally on Pope Francis' questions I need to acknowledge the struggle to 'walk with hope' and to have 'a drawer open to hope'.

The numbers of men, women and children without home or country are staggering. Destruction, especially in Syria, occupies not only the journalists and media but all of us around the world. The number of deaths in our time is at unheard of levels. Where does one find and keep hope?

Recently I watched as holocaust survivors spoke out against standing by and watching as innocent people suffer and die. Their concern and their voices were signs of hope as well as a call to action. Over these holy days people have been offering hands of welcome, friendship and forgiveness. Stories of reconciliations show that we are listening to the signs of hope.

I am learning that I need to be aware of the manifold expressions of hope, peace, honest dialogue and forgiveness. Just as God sent a baby to challenge us to live as the human beings God created us to be, so too I need to watch for the many little signs of God's hope expressed in so many different ways. Anne Frank wrote, "Think of all the beauty left around you and be happy." St. Mother Teresa once said "Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls." Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Never lose infinite hope."

It takes only one person to make a profound difference in the lives of others. Imagine what can be accomplished if we all joined together to help each other to see the signs of hope and reconciliation, and in 'seeing' we embraced a life of hope.

St. Paul reminds us in Hebrews that, "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered." Paul also wrote, "And we want each one of you to show the same diligence to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

May our new year be filled with infinite hope!

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